

Emerging Issues and Next Steps

Description

Based on the summaries developed by scribes throughout the meeting and participation in the plenary and breakout sessions, the closing panel provided theme-based summaries of the key issues that emerged throughout the meeting. Following these presentations, meeting participants shared their thoughts about the issues raised as well as next steps in child care research.

Moderator

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Presenters and Discussants

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Beth Rous, University of Kentucky
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Scribe

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Discussion Notes

Beth Rous, Systems Perspective

- Lee Bolman's and Terrence Deal's framework for organizational leadership allows us to ensure that at a systems level we are addressing critical components of the system. We have used the word "context," and this presentation focuses on context in terms of "frameworks."
 - *Structural framework*: Roles and responsibilities (organizational structures), logic models, and theory-based models--what we need to articulate to reach our goals.
 - Problem occurs when the structure does not fit the situation.
 - *Human resources framework*: What we need from our human resources. Do we have teachers and State administrators who are prepared for what they are facing?
 - Families are navigating multiple systems that are not congruent. We need to see this process from the eyes of the children when we are creating systems.
 - Role of higher education in this process: What are we doing to support them, and how are we articulating things across systems?
 - *Political arenas framework*: Sometimes our research needs to catch up with our policy or vice versa. This is a cyclical, iterative process, with limited resources and constraints related to the policies. How do they affect our research?
 - *Symbolic cultural framework*: Specifically rituals and traditions. Are we being intentional, or are we stuck in a rut? Tribes: Are we tribes of people who have special interests in certain areas, and how can we build a system that crosses systems? The role of history needs to be considered.

- What do we need to build systems?
 - Professional development (PD).
 - Measures of quality.
- Higher Education Opportunity Act just passed in Congress; it offers an opportunity of partnership grants.
- Technological advances allow us to build communities at the State or local level.

Julia Henly, Cross-Cutting Themes among the Panels

- There was a lot of information given both in the posters and breakout sessions. This information varies in methodological approach and topic.
- Key areas and themes focusing on parents and families:
 - *Parental decisionmaking:*
 - What shapes parents' access to care (e.g., constraints, facilitators).
 - Complexity of models (e.g., attention to supply and demand, constraints as well as opportunities).
 - Inclusion of community, employment, and other contextual influences.
 - Diversity in methodology, population, and discipline (i.e., the importance of mixed-methods designs).
 - Value in large national data and/or experimental analysis and the complexity allowed by indepth studies.
 - Coordination of disciplines is important as we move forward.
 - Population diversity: A range of populations to which attention has not been paid in the past (e.g., racial minorities, English-language learners).
 - Complexity of models is a challenge for design, measurement, and analysis tasks.
 - Empirical approaches that address this complexity are challenging.
 - Incorporation of the dynamics of complexity in the empirical approaches (e.g., capturing decisions at the right time and in the window in which families make choices).
 - “Chicken-and-egg” issues (e.g., employment, child care subsidies, child care choices) result in multidirectional arrows in the models.
 - *Child care subsidies:*
 - Impact on employment and child care choice.
 - We have advanced in our knowledge about design, operation, and implementation issues.
 - Deanna Schexnayder's presentations about clustering policies and the ways that they affect subsidy duration and employment outcome.
 - Accumulating evidence about subsidies and employment outcomes.
 - How can we make subsidies more flexible and supportive? (For example, it would be great to move in a direction such that subsidies could be a buffer for families with employment issues.)
 - Work that shows subsidies' effects on employment duration and wage growth.

- New findings are coming soon (e.g., three-State study of subsidy take-up rates).
- Importance of continued multimethod approaches.
- Future questions of interest:
 - Testing novel, subsidy-delivery systems and their relationship to subsidy, employment, and child care duration.
 - Better understanding of take-up rates and barriers to take up.
 - We need to test novel subsidy systems with rigorous designs (e.g., Ann Collins' experimental study that includes survey data).
 - We need to focus on the barriers to subsidy receipt. The three-State study will tell us whether parents take up subsidies but not why they made this choice.
- *Family responsive and culturally responsive dimensions of care:*
 - The definition of quality.
 - Breaking the traditional dimensions of quality to consider parent- and family-focused outcomes.
 - Strength of attending to model development.
 - Need for more research using diverse research designs and methods.
 - What are the dimensions and constructs of quality focused on parent/family responsiveness?
 - Descriptive studies of what providers are currently doing to be receptive.
 - Studies that examine the relationship between culturally focused and family-focused dimensions of quality and parent/child outcomes.
 - Parents use multiple arrangements—both for one child and for their family. We need to incorporate this reality, perhaps by modeling the package of care rather than just one arrangement.
 - The policy message—policy flexibility. Policies need to adapt to the world in which families live and to the constraints placed on low-income families.
- *How do we undertake research on the complex world in which we live?*

Martha Zaslow, Quality Cross-Cutting Themes

- *Quality initiatives and quality methodologies.*
 - Quality rating systems (QRS) are a radical development, and more than 25 States are contemplating or undertaking QRS setup tasks; however, we cannot forget that there are other quality initiatives.
 - History of the work on this has been with education (e.g., formal education, training, onsite coaches and approaches).
 - QUINCE and Project Upgrade.
 - We have multiple models:
 - Coaching on a curriculum
 - Coaching based on a rating scale and quality improvement plan
 - Coaching side by side with a teacher

- Needing a common vocabulary.
- Development of tiered systems, for which we need evaluations.
- We need to start looking at the quality of PD, dosage, and training-of-trainer models.
- QUINCE has experimental impact data and a large data set to look at home-based care. We also have rich qualitative and descriptive data.
- QRS: We need to get key stakeholders to agree with each other about the goals and other issues. We have to learn from each stakeholder.
- Evaluating QRS: We need the correct information to conduct implementation studies of QRS. This process is different than that for outcome research, which is also needed. Our outcome studies need to address different target groups, such as parents, children, and providers. Each group needs to be addressed later.
- Measures of quality: Although it was difficult to hear that our current measures of quality are not predicting child outcomes as strongly as we would have liked, the results were still statistically significant. Also, we are carefully developing new conceptually based ideas about measures. Our future will bring better measures.
- Quality across settings: It is exciting that we are focused on home-based care. We are developing the definitions for home-based care that go past regulation status. We are also beginning to look at quality from a home-based care point of view rather than trying to impose center measures on home-based care.
- We need well-developed evaluation models and will have new intervention approaches.
- *Major quality themes:*
 - How closely linked the themes are (e.g., quality, systems, families).
 - We have gotten much better at experimental design, but we need to include mixed methods. For example, we need to combine rigorous experimental design and qualitative and descriptive data.
 - Time for change: How long does it take for change to occur? Can change be sustained?
 - Our measures and methods are not adequate given the areas into which the field has grown.
 - Context is important in the process of research design and interpretation.

Discussion

- The Child Care Policy Research Consortium (CCPRC) has done a great job at integrating new members, new research, and key themes. In the beginning, it was challenging to think about collaborations among researchers to build CCPRC. The field is so complex and rich that it can be overwhelming, but CCPRC has done a great job.
- What are the greatest needs for research?
 - QRS evaluations and technical assistance: What are the effects on providers and child outcomes?

- Cross-system research: Parents are moving toward quality, but are the systems moving toward quality? We need to think more broadly about how the domains are connected.
- Complexities of issues that constrain families on the State level (e.g., changing infrastructures and policies). It could be helpful to have State representatives reporting out what works under what conditions and why (even if this information would not be empirically based). This information could be banked and evaluated empirically later.
- We need to keep focusing the work around families as a dimension of support moving forward. If we do not serve families, we are not serving children.
- We see substantive, long-term research that leaves short-term, unanswered questions. Perhaps we could have a funding process to tie down the “loose ends.”
- What does the future hold in terms of unionization and quality care?

Key Themes

- We are doing a great job of embracing new members and new research, integrating new disciplines, furthering rigor in the field, identifying topics worthy of examination, and addressing the complexities of our field.
- We need common definitions.
- We are acknowledging the current state of research, do not feel threatened when we find that we are not where we want to be, and take this information as motivation to move forward.
- We need to do more work around family supports and child care.
- We need to look more at policy variations and associated outcomes.
- We need to continue to move the field forward through rigorous experimental designs and qualitative and descriptive data.
- We need to continue to address the complexities of the field in our research design, our use of systems, and our evaluations.